



RECOMMENDED

BEST PRACTICES FOR MENTOR PROGRAMS

Source: National Mentoring Working Group, convened by United Way of America and One to One the National Mentoring Partnership, 1991

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DEFINITION OF MENTORING

MENTORING DEFINED AS:

For the purposes of the Governor's Mentoring Partnership (GMP), mentoring is defined as a relationship over a prolonged period of time between two or more people where older, wiser, more experienced individuals assist youth through the human development process by providing constant, as needed support, guidance, and concrete help to a minor whose at-risk environment increases their chance of exposure to teen pregnancy, academic failure, gangs and violence, use of alcohol and drugs and other at-risk behaviors. It is the intention of the GMP that relationships last at least the length of a school year and that the ratio of mentors to mentees not exceed 1 to 4.

CALIFORNIA MENTORING ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

For purposes of the Governor's Mentoring Partnership the following have been identified as elements of effective mentoring practice.

A RESPONSIBLE MENTORING PROGRAM WILL INCLUDE:

- A well-defined mission and established operating policy.
- Regular, consistent contact between the mentor and the participant.
- Consent by the family or guardian of the mentee.
- Additional community support services.
- An established organization for oversight.
- Adherence to general principles of volunteerism.
- Paid or volunteer staff with appropriate skills.
- Written job descriptions for all staff and volunteer positions.
- Adherence to EEO requirements.
- Inclusiveness of racial, economic, and gender representation as appropriate to the program.
- Adequate financial and in-kind resources.
- Written administrative and program procedures.

- Written eligibility requirements for program participants.
- Program evaluation and ongoing assessment.
- A long-range plan that has community input.
- Risk management and confidentiality policies.
- Use of generally accepted accounting practices.
- A prudent and reasonable rationale for staffing requirements that are based on:
 - Organization's statement of purpose and goals
 - Needs of mentors and mentees
 - Community resources
 - Staff and other volunteers' skill level

FOR PURPOSES OF THE GOVERNOR'S
MENTORING PARTNERSHIP, QUALITY
MENTORING PROGRAMS NEED TO HAVE
THE FOLLOWING

1. A STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND A LONG RANGE PLAN THAT INCLUDES:
 - Who, what, where, when, why and how activities will be performed.
 - Input from originators, staff, funders, potential volunteers, and participants.
 - Assessment of community need.
 - Realistic, attainable, and easy-to-understand operational plan.
 - Goals, objectives, and timelines for all aspects of the plan.
 - Funding and resources development plan.
2. A RECRUITMENT PLAN FOR BOTH MENTORS AND MENTEES THAT INCLUDES:
 - Strategies that portray accurate expectations and benefits. Year round marketing and public relations. Targeted outreach based on participant's needs.
 - Volunteer opportunities beyond mentoring (i.e., event organization, office support, etc.)
 - A basis in your program's statement of purpose and long-range plan.
3. AN ORIENTATION FOR MENTORS AND MENTEES THAT INCLUDES:
 - Program overview.
 - Description of eligibility, screening process, and suitability requirements.
 - Level of commitment expected (time, energy, and flexibility).
 - Expectations and restrictions (accountability).
 - Benefits and rewards they can expect.
 - A separate focus for potential mentors and participants.
 - A summary of program policies, including written reports, interviews evaluation, and reimbursement.

4. ELIGIBILITY SCREENING FOR MENTORS AND MENTEES THAT INCLUDES:

- An application process and review.
- Face-to-face interview.
- Reference checks for mentors which must include criminal history record checks (finger printing), and may include character references, child abuse registry check, and driving record checks.
- Suitability criteria that relate to the program statement of purpose and needs of the target population. Could include some or all of the following: personality profile; skills identification; gender; age; language and racial requirements; level of education; career interests; motivation for volunteering; and academic standing.
- Successful completion of pre-match training and orientation.

IF YOU HAVE YOUTH MENTORS, THE FOLLOWING WILL APPLY:

- An application process which must include a parental consent form.
- Face-to-face interview.
- Reference checks of at least two personal non-related adults.
- Successful completion of a pre-match training and orientation.

5. A READINESS AND TRAINING CURRICULUM FOR ALL MENTORS AND MENTEES THAT INCLUDES:

- Trained staff trainers.
- Orientation to program and resource network, including information and referral, other supportive services, and schools.
- Skills development as appropriate.
- Cultural/heritage sensitivity and appreciation training.
- Guidelines for participants on how to get the most out of the mentoring relationship.
- Do's and don'ts of relationship management.
- Job and role descriptions.
- Confidentiality and liability information.
- Crisis management/problem solving resources.
- Communication skills development.
- Ongoing sessions as necessary.

6. A MATCHING STRATEGY THAT INCLUDES:

- A link with the program's statement of purpose.
- A commitment to consistency.
- A grounding in the program's eligibility criteria.
- A rationale for the selection of this particular matching strategy from the wide range of available models.

- Appropriate criteria for matches, including some or all of the following: gender; age; language; requirements; availability; needs; interests; preferences of volunteer and participant; life experience; temperament.
- Signed statements of understanding that both parties agree to the conditions of the match and the mentoring relationship.
- The program may have pre-match social activities between mentor and mentees.
- Team building activities to reduce the anxiety of the first meeting.

7. A MONITORING PROCESS THAT INCLUDES:

- Consistent scheduled meetings with staff, mentors, and mentees.
- A tracking system for ongoing assessment.
- Written records.
- Input from family, community partners, and significant others.
- A process for managing grievances, praise, rematching, interpersonal problem solving, and premature relationship closure.

8. A SUPPORT, RECOGNITION AND RETENTION COMPONENT THAT MAY INCLUDE:

- A formal kick-off event.
- Ongoing peer support groups for volunteers, participants, and others.
- Ongoing training and development.
- Relevant issue discussion and information dissemination.
- Networking with appropriate organizations.
- Social gatherings of different groups as needed.
- Annual recognition and appreciation event.
- Newsletters or other mailings to mentors, mentees, supporters, and funders.

9. CLOSURE STEPS THAT INCLUDE:

- Private and confidential exit interviews to de-brief the mentoring relationship between:
 - Mentee and staff
 - Mentor and staff
 - Mentor and mentee without staff
- Clearly stated policy for future contacts between mentor and mentee.
- Assistance for participating in defining next steps for achieving personal goals (for the mentee).

10. AN EVALUATION PROCESS BASED ON:

- Outcome analysis of program and relationship.
- Program criteria and statement of purpose.
- Information needs of board, funders, community partners, and other supporters of the program.